THE NEW
# INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • MONDAY • DECEMBER 26, 2022 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 16 • LATE CITY EDITION

Workers set up tents at the Vila Belmiro Stadium, the home of the Santos FC where Pele played most of his career, in Santos on Sunday | AP

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## AILING PELE'S FAMILY SPENDS CHRISTMAS EVE BY BEDSIDE

**Son Edinho was the latest to arrive to be by his father. Edinho arrived on Saturday after denying that he would go to hospital...**

### MESSAGE FROM DAUGHTER KELY

Shortly after midnight local time, Kely Nascimento, Pele's daughter, posted a picture. It had Marcia Aoli and other family members gathered at the Albert Einstein Hospital where he is being treated. Pele wasn't visible in the image. "Almost all of us. Merry Christmas. Gratitude, love, union, family. The essence of Christmas. We thank you all for all the love and light you send us," she wrote

### CONDITION WORSENING IN HOSPITAL

- On Wednesday, the hospital announced Pele's colon cancer was showing "progression" and he needed "more extensive care to treat kidney and heart failure"
- He was hospitalized on Nov 29 for what his medical team called a re-evaluation of his chemotherapy treatments

THREE

NO OF WORLD CUPS PELE WON WITH BRAZIL, THE ONLY PLAYER TO DO SO

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

FESTIVE LIGHTS

After two years of muted festivities due to Covid, crowds thronged churches across the country this Christmas on Sunday for special prayers. In the picture, a girl offers prayers at the Infant Jesus Church in Bengaluru | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

# NEPAL'S PRACHANDA JUMPS SHIP, APPOINTED NEW PRIME MINISTER

To take oath today; forms new alliance with Oli as deal with Deuba hits rough weather

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

ON a day of high drama, CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' was appointed the new prime minister of Nepal after he broke away from the Nepal Congress-led coalition and embracing his sworn enemy K P Sharma Oli, who heads the CPN-UML. Prachanda, 68, will take his oath of office and secrecy on Monday.

The former Maoist guerrilla's appointment capped weeks of intense power struggle within the ruling alliance after last month's general elections failed to produce a clear winner.

Since President Bidya Devi Bhandari had set a 5 pm deadline on Sunday to end the political stalemate, Prachanda staked his claim at 4 pm to form the new government with the support of 168 lawmakers in the 275-member House of Representatives.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal

However, the new axis, called the Balkot coalition, will be inherently unstable as Oli's is the biggest party in the grouping with 78 representatives as against Prachanda's 32. This would be Prachanda's third tenure as PM.

The deal to form the Balkot coalition was clinched at a meeting at Oli's residence. It comprises CPN-UML with 78 members of Parliament, CPN-MC 32, RSP 20, RPP 14, JSP 12, Janamat 6 and Nagarik Unmukti Party 3.

The new government will be a cause of concern for India as many members of the Balkot coalition like Oli are anti-India. All major projects India slated to develop in Nepal could be delayed, if not put on hold.

Sources said China had encouraged all Left wing parties to bury the hatchet and forge a coalition to capture power.

Nepal Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba and Prachanda had earlier reached an understanding to lead the new government on a rotational basis. While Prachanda wanted to be the prime minister in the first round, Deuba refused to yield, hence the former left the alliance.

"One of the major tasks for new prime minister Prachanda will include striking a balance between India and China," said former Nepalese Ambassador Vijay Kant Karna.

As prime minister last year while facing a revolt from coalition partner Prachanda, Oli had redrawn Nepal's political map by incorporating three key Indian territories — Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura — in order to divert attention.

**Gave up armed struggle in 2006**

Prachanda led an armed struggle from 1996 to 2006 that ended with signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006 and him joining the political mainstream

## CAG FLAGS RISK OF DATA TAMPERING IN UPDATED ASSAM NRC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Guwahati

THE Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has detected large-scale anomalies in the updation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.

In its report of 2020 submitted to the state Assembly on Saturday, the CAG said 215 software utilities were added in a haphazard manner to the core software used for updating the document.

The report said a secure software was needed for the updation but due process was not followed either for the development of software or the selection of vendors. The report said the 'improper' software development, related to data capture and correction, left room for data tampering. The report further said the project cost of ₹288.18 crore escalated to ₹1,602.66 crore due to time overrun.

Over 19 lakh of the 3.3 crore applicants were left out of the NRC's "complete draft" published on August 31, 2018. It was updated when Prateek Hajela, an IAS officer, was its coordinator. He is now serving outside the state.

Hitesh Dev Sarma, who succeeded Hajela, later filed two FIRs with the CID of police and the Vigilance and Anti-corruption Wing against the latter alleging corruption and money laundering.

Sarma on Sunday said he stood vindicated. "I had filed two FIRs... (but) the government did not register the cases. Now that the CAG has detected the anomalies, there cannot be any hurdles in registering the two cases," said Sarma, who attained superannuation in July. "The government should order re-verification to ensure the names of Indians who were left out are included and those of the foreigners deleted," he added.

**DODGY SOFTWARE?**

Updating of the 1951 NRC for Assam was done following a Supreme Court order, in order to detect illegal citizens who had entered the state after March 25, 1971

The final NRC list released in August 2019 had left out 19 lakh of the 3.3 crore applicants on suspicion of their claims as Indian citizens

The CAG says a highly secure software should have been developed but instead, 215 software utilities were added in a haphazard manner to the core software

This created room for data tampering in the NRC updatation process, according to the CAG

The initial project cost was estimated at ₹288.18 crore when the NRC updation process had commenced in December 2014

But project cost escalated to ₹1,602.66 crore by the time the final draft of the document was published in August 2019

The CAG audit also revealed irregularities in the utilisation of funds including "excess and inadmissible payment to vendors"

## CM's meet on Covid norms today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

WITH the Omicron subvariant that is causing havoc in China detected in India, the state government is likely to frame Covid guidelines ahead of the New Year's Eve celebrations.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai is holding a meeting in Belagavi on Monday with Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar, Revenue Minister R Ashoka and members of the Technical Advisory Committee on Covid. Ashoka, also the minister for disaster management, however, ruled out any severe restrictions on New Year celebrations and on travel.

"The Centre has already given us several instructions and the state government will take a decision based on them," Bommai said in Bengaluru. He stressed that the decision will take international repercussions into consideration.

Last week, the state government decided to make wearing of masks compulsory in closed spaces. Authorities also instructed mandatory tests for those with symptoms of influenza-Like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI). Ashoka said the state is unlikely to see a lockdown or other severe restrictions. "We don't want to trigger panic among the public. We want to ensure that precautionary measures are taken. Rules like wearing masks will be back, especially indoors and in air-conditioned halls," he said.

Asked if instructions would not queer the holiday mood of the people, Ashoka said the government is only testing international travellers who are landing in Karnataka. "There will be no restrictions on travelling within the state or country as the situation is not that bad," he added.

The meeting on Monday is likely to discuss preparations and ramping up of infrastructure, like oxygen beds, ICUs, medicines and other facilities.

## If war breaks out, India has to fight China & Pak: Rahul

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

ON a day when China's foreign minister Wang Yi said China is willing to work with India to improve relations, the Congress released a video of party leader Rahul Gandhi warning of a larger war in which Beijing and Islamabad will join hands to defeat India.

On Sunday, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said his country is committed to maintaining communication with India to ensure border stability.

In the video released on Sunday, Rahul warned that India will be in an 'extremely vulnerable position' in the event of a war. "Earlier we had two enemies — China and Pakistan — and our policy was to keep them separate. Today, there is one front that is China and Pakistan. If war happens, it will happen with both. They are working together not only militarily but also economically," Rahul says during an interaction with Army veterans.

He said China and Pakistan are both gearing up to 'surprise' India. "Which is why I keep repeating the government cannot keep quiet. The government should tell people what happened at the border." Warning that there will be major loss for India if a war breaks out, he said the government's mindset is not of joint operability and of cyber warfare. "India is now extremely vulnerable... If we don't act fast, there'll be a big loss. I'm extremely concerned with what's happening at the border in Arunachal and Ladakh," he added.

SURATHKAL MURDER

## Cuffs on 5, CM promises fair investigation

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mangaluru

FIVE persons, including two women, were taken into custody by the Mangaluru city police in connection with the murder of **Abdul Jaleel**, 45, who was a store owner in Katipalla 4th Block, near Surathkal on Saturday night.

The police suspect Jaleel's alleged closeness to a couple of women enraged some people who attacked and killed him.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai sought the cooperation of people in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi in Katipalla by not heeding to any rumours regarding Jaleel's murder, and said the police will conduct a fair investigation.

Jaleel was reportedly close to a woman, which led to a heated exchange between him and two other men on Saturday night. When the assailants attacked him, Jaleel tried to escape, but slipped and fell, and was stabbed to death. **P3**

LOOKING BACK 2022

*The New Indian Express* looks back at various sectors in 2022 that have dominated news | **P4**

## Hearing on bail applications of eight former Naval officers in Doha today

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

FOUR months since eight former Indian naval officers were placed under solitary confinement in Doha, their petitions for bail will come up for hearing on Monday.

This is their fifth attempt at securing bail. The officers were working for Dahra Global Technologies & Consultancy Services in Doha when they were picked up by Qatar's interior ministry. No charges have been framed against them yet though those with families in Doha are allowed to have weekly physical meetings with them. However, families of officers who are in India have not been granted visas to meet them.

"Family members of some of the detained officers have been trying to get visas from Qatar for sometime now. During to the FIFA World Cup, there was a caveat that those applying for visas to Qatar had to buy a ticket for matches in Doha. Since these family members were not interested in a football match ticket, they were denied visas. Now that the World Cup is over there is optimism that visas would be granted soon," say sources.

The officers, however, are allowed a 10-minute phone call every week with their families in India.

"Families back home are stressed with the delay in the repatriation of these officers. These eight Indians are amongst the top ranking officials working for the company. A representative of the company (Dahra) does check on them regularly but families are waiting for news of their return," sources add.

All hopes are pinned on Monday's bail appeal. The Indian fraternity and families are hoping that they will get relief this time around.

EXPRESS READ

**Expect light rain today**

Bengaluru: Bengalureans, who headed out on Sunday, were in for a surprise as the city witnessed light rain in the afternoon and night. According to IMD's local report, the city on Sunday recorded a minimum temperature of 18 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 25. IMD has predicted light rain on Monday too.

PIC: SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

**Janardhana Reddy forms 'secular' political party**

Bengaluru: Ending suspense, former minister Gali Janardhana Reddy on Sunday announced the launch of his political outfit, Kalyana Rajya Pragati Paksha (KRPP) and declared that he will contest from the Gangavathi | **P4**

**3 NGOs suspend work in Af after Taliban fiat**

Kabul: Three major international aid groups — Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and CARE — on Sunday suspended their operations in Afghanistan following Taliban's order banning women from working at NGOs | **P9**

## Train mess: Kabaddi team stands for hrs to get seats

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

UNDER-16 Kabaddi players from the state, participating in the Sub-Junior National Championship in Jamshedpur, missed their train due to confusion over the boarding station and had to wait for a long time at the Yesvantpur railway station before taking another train that was packed with passengers.

As they did not get seats, the group of 12 boys and 12 girls had to stand in the passage, and some near the toilet, for a few hours.

They were scheduled to board the Anga Express. Instead of waiting for it at the Sir MV terminal, they were directed to the Yesvantpur station because of miscommunication from the Karnataka Kabaddi Association and team managers.

Team manager Sanjeev Masalji and coach Anand Basvaraj assumed that the train would depart from the Yesvantpur station. Masalji said, "During the booking or afterwards, we never knew that the train would leave from the Sir MV terminal. For years, Anga Express has been departing from Yesvantpur station."

The association too did not give them the right information. "Later, we booked another train, Prasanthi Express, which was packed. For a long time, the students could not get seats and had to remain standing, waiting near the toilet. Only after a few passengers alighted, some adjustments were made and they were provided seats," the manager said.

The incident has left the children exhausted, Masalji said.

**We booked another train, Prasanthi Express, which was packed. For a long time, the students could not get seats and had to remain standing, waiting near the toilet.**

Team manager Sanjeev Masalji

CONTINUED ON : P2

## 7-yr-old electrocuted on Mysuru school premises

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

A seven-year-old boy was electrocuted on the premises of Sri Morarji Desai Model Residential School in Nanjangud on Sunday.

The police said that the boy, Navin, died after accidently touching a live electric wire that had fallen on the ground. He is the son of the school's physical education teacher Basavanna.

The incident occurred when he was filling water into a bottle at the school dining hall.

Though the child was rushed to the Krishna Hospital in Nanjangud, the doctors declared him brought dead. The body was later shifted to taluk hospital for postmortem. DySP Govindharaju and PSI Arathi visited the spot and collected details.